

# 2010 LEGISLATIVE REVIEW

## State Representatives Frank Chopp & Jamie Pedersen

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Dear neighbors,

The 2010 Legislative Session recently concluded, and it was one of the most difficult in living memory. The worst recession since the Great Depression has battered the Washington state budget, just as it has in 47 other states. It has also hurt the budgets of most families and businesses in our state. Many Washingtonians are suffering.

In 2009, we had to cut \$3.3 billion from the state operating budget to keep it balanced. Since we left Olympia last year, however, tax revenue plummeted again and demand for state services increased. This left a shortfall of \$2.8 billion this session.

Throughout it all, we kept in mind the priorities of the people of Washington. We made as many additional cuts as we believed we responsibly could, and we supported raising new revenue through a combination of targeted tax increases and closing tax loopholes to protect critical services. Raising revenue is not something we took lightly, especially in a recession. That's why it was only one part of our budget-balancing strategy.

This budget involves \$840 million in program cuts, \$757 million in new revenue, \$584 million in funds from other state accounts, and \$633 million in federal assistance. With the new revenue, we managed to protect funding for:

- All-day kindergarten
- State Need Grants for college students
- Apple Health for Kids
- Basic Health Plan
- Early Childhood Education Assistance Program
- Disability Lifeline (formerly called GAU)
- And many other critical priorities

Balancing the budget was our highest priority for the session, but we achieved some important progress on education, environment and consumer protection issues. We hope you find this newsletter to be helpful and informative.

Sincerely,

*Frank Chopp Jamie Pedersen*

**TOLL-FREE HOTLINE:**

1-800-562-6000





## House Speaker Frank Chopp

In this historic legislative session, we worked to carry out a progressive agenda based on the priorities of the people:

### Opportunity Pathways

- ✓ Protected financial aid through **State Need Grants**, making sure that tens of thousands of low-income students can go to college.
- ✓ Created a new **Opportunity Express** and expanded **Opportunity Grants** for workforce training.

### Student Success

- ✓ Approved a new framework for increased school funding as recommended by the **Quality Education Council**, reforming the funding formulas for basic education, including investments in classrooms, transportation, supplies, and many other areas.

### Smart Start

- ✓ Approved ground-breaking legislation to make early learning an entitlement for low-income children through the state's **Head Start** programs.

### Healthcare Remedies

- ✓ Kept our promise to make sure all children in Washington have health care, through **Apple Health** (780,000 are now covered in this public plan).
- ✓ Protected health care for 70,000 people through the **Basic Health Plan**.
- ✓ Helped lead the nation in health care reform, working closely with U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell to include language in the federal legislation that will build upon our state's success with Apple Health and the Basic Health Plan.



### Security Lifeline

- ✓ Protected basic subsistence and health care for 70,000 unemployable people with disabilities, by reforming the "GA-U" program into the **Disability Lifeline**, saving the lives of many who have mental illness and are homeless.

### Washington Works

- ✓ Created the **Washington Works Housing Act**, which will build or acquire thousands of homes for low-wage workers across the state, made permanently affordable through public or non-profit development and ownership.
- ✓ Proposed the **JOBS (Jobs, Opportunities and Better Schools) Act** of 2010, a referendum to the voters this November to authorize over \$2 billion to retrofit public schools, save energy costs, and create over 30,000 jobs.

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## SR 520 Bridge News



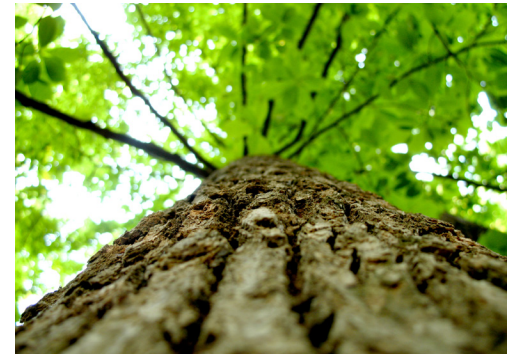
In our previous newsletter, we expressed our serious concerns about the proposed west side design for the SR 520 bridge project. A legislative workgroup concluded in December that the preferred bridge replacement design would be a six-lane structure with a wider Montlake interchange and a second drawbridge over the Montlake Cut.

As members of that workgroup, we voted against the proposal because it lacked good transit connections and adequate mitigation for the surrounding neighborhood.

During this legislative session, the Legislature moved the 520 bridge replacement project forward by authorizing construction on the eastside portion of the project through Senate Bill 6392. We worked hard to improve the project through this legislation, fighting for a greater role for the city in improving the proposed transit connection and protecting neighborhoods and the environment on the west side. In particular, we are excited about the possibility of creating a robust transit connection between the University Link light rail line and the SR 520 bridge.

New local workgroups will take a closer look at transit, bridge design, and mitigation concerns over the next several months. The groups' recommendations will be considered by the 2011 Legislature and the state Department of Transportation. We are fighting as hard as we can to make this project work better for our district and the region.

## Wins for the Environment



- ✓ **SB 6248** bans the sale of plastic sports bottles and children's food and drink containers that use the chemical Bisphenol A (BPA). Reports from the FDA and other scientific bodies have expressed concern that BPA may be hazardous to human health, especially in children.
- ✓ **SB 6557** gradually phases out the use of copper and other toxic materials in vehicle brake pads, making Washington the first state to do so. Each time you brake, a small amount of these materials grinds off onto the roadway, later carried away by rain into waterways.
- ✓ **SB 5543** requires that all lights containing mercury be recycled starting in 2013. This will be a cooperative effort among consumers, producers and local governments. Mercury is used in small amounts in fluorescent light bulbs, and it is a toxin that can damage the human nervous and cardiovascular systems, as well as the environment.
- ✓ **HB 2593** takes action to reduce the amount of derelict fishing gear and crab pots in Puget Sound. Every year thousands of pieces of gear are left behind by fishers, needlessly trapping marine life and littering the ecosystem.

## State Representative Jamie Pedersen



## Fairness and Safety for Washington

Ensuring fairness and quality of life for consumers and families is at the core of my work in the Legislature. As chair of the House Judiciary Committee, I worked on several important bills that passed during the 2010 Legislative Session and have been signed into law.

### Improving Roadway Safety

An ignition interlock device (IIL) tests the alcohol on a driver's breath and prevents a car engine from starting if the driver is drunk. Technology is helping us to keep drunk drivers from driving without having to incarcerate them. HB 2742 expands our existing, successful IIL program by allowing more types of offenders to use it. This will make our roads safer for everyone.



### Protecting Home Buyers and Other Consumers

After a recent Supreme Court decision, some companies have been able to shut down to avoid paying their obligations. This has been a common tactic of real estate developers to avoid claims by those who buy homes in their developments. HB 2657, of which I was the prime sponsor, will make sure that there is more public notice and more time for consumers to pursue those kinds of claims.

### Protecting the Right to Petition Government

The right to petition government is protected by the First Amendment to the federal constitution. This cherished right is fundamental to our democracy. If, for example, you witness an unlawful hiring practice or you're concerned about a new high-rise development in your neighborhood, you have the right to "blow the whistle" or speak out for government action.

To prevent people from exercising these rights, some organizations resort to filing bogus lawsuits against whistleblowers as a harassment technique. These lawsuits are nearly always dismissed, but not until after a lengthy and costly legal process. SB 6395 updates Washington's groundbreaking law that allows courts to deal with these suits more quickly.

### Ensuring Safe Rental Properties

Renters shouldn't need to worry about hazardous wiring, poor ventilation or other kinds of home defects. Everyone deserves to live in a safe dwelling, yet substandard housing still persists in some communities.

SB 6459 gives new tools to local governments to prevent substandard housing from being offered and to enforce existing housing codes. This bill allows cities to require landlords to provide inspection certificates and also makes it easier for inspectors to verify unsafe or illegal conditions. We need to ensure all renters feel the same level of security, not just some.



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### Supporting Children by Improving Education



The Washington state Constitution identifies public education as the state's "paramount duty." Over the past two years, we've been engaged in the largest education reform process in 30 years. We believe that these reforms will improve our public education system and help our students to succeed.

**Accountability for school performance** SB 6696 improves school accountability measures and makes Washington more competitive with other states for the Race to the Top federal grant program.

**Dropout re-engagement** HB 1418 creates a dropout retrieval program open to 16-to-21 year olds who aren't on track to graduate with a diploma by age 21. The program can include GED preparation,

academic skills training, and college and work-readiness preparation.

**Improved funding process** HB 2776 revises the state's school funding formulas to make the budgeting process simpler and more transparent. It also implements recommendations of the Quality Education Council, the panel of state education leaders guiding the implementation of last year's sweeping reform bill, HB 2261.

**Local assistance** HB 2893 improves school districts' ability to collect local, voter-approved funding. It also provides a temporary offset to the cuts made by the state last year by allowing a temporary raise in the levy lid along with increased funding for levy equalization for property-poor districts.

**Early learning** HB 2731 establishes a voluntary program of early learning for eligible 3 and 4 year olds. Funding will be phased in over the coming years, leading to early learning becoming a state entitlement program for eligible children.

### Legislators, Staff not Immune to Cuts

The Legislature's multi-billion-dollar rounds of cuts touched nearly every area of state government—including the Legislature itself.

- The House's own budget was cut 9 percent
- Salary levels for legislators and staff are frozen
- Legislators' per diem and print/mail budgets were cut
- 40 hours of unpaid leave is required of staff each year
- Permanent staff have been reduced by five percent
- Temporary staffing (during sessions) was reduced

